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CONSTANCE ANNE FOURNIER

NAVIGATING WOMEN
EXPLORING THE ROLES OF NINETEENTH-CENTURY NEW ENGLAND SAILING WIVES

By the mid-nineteenth century hundreds of New England women were living abroad the nation's whaling and merchant vessels, spending months – even years – at sea. For these intrepid women, managing a family proved difficult, and the isolation from female society was trying. Yet life at sea freed them from some of the traditional forms of domestic work and allowed them to experiment with new roles – teaching, preaching, navigating, keeping logs, and at times tempering their husbands' harsh shipboard justice.

During the nineteenth century, the spheres of influence of American men and women were more and more segregated as the nucleus of economic activity moved away from the home and farm to the city and the factory. While men continued to be active in the public sphere, women's lives became increasingly limited to the private and the domestic. Like other middle-class Victorians, women in New England's maritime communities became wives and mothers who nurtured and maintained their families, setting religious and moral examples for the family and community. Yet wives who faced long and frequent separations from their sea-captain husbands were often forced to take on male responsibilities in addition to their own domestic chores.

Women like Mary Van Horn, pictured shooting the sun aboard the bark *Helen A. Wyman* en route from Australia to South Africa, gave up their secure New England homes to join their husbands at sea. In this confined, yet sometimes liberating atmosphere, they extended and enhanced their traditional domestic roles.
Courtesy Maine Maritime Museum, Bath

Like "deputy husbands" of an earlier century, wives of seafarers were obliged to handle family business and to manage the family.[1]

Discussing roles for women, the feminist intellectual Margaret Fuller asserted: "Let them be sea captains, if you will. I do not doubt there are women well fitted for such an office, and, if so, I should be as glad to see them in it"[2] Although nineteenth-century society did not permit the "fairer sex" to take on one of man's most heroic roles – that of sea captain – wives frequently accompanied their captain husbands to sea. Voyaging through the wide oceans for months and even years allowed ordinary housewives to extend and enhance their traditional female roles. Managing a family alone ashore increased a woman's independent spirit, strength of character, and knowledge of certain male skills and responsibilities. These experiences enabled women to make the difficult decision to leave family and friends behind and to adjust to a life at sea. Once aboard ship, women performed a variety of tasks, from keeping house to learning navigation. A few even assumed command of the ship in an emergency, just as they had supervised their own households in their husbands' absences. Many accepted the challenge of life upon the high seas as preferable to waiting years at home for their husbands' return.

The Russells of Nantucket were the first American family to make a home on a whaling ship. Mary Russell joined her husband aboard the whaleship *Hydra* in 1817, and their twelve-year-old son William signed on as cabin boy. She took along her seven-year-old son Charles and faithfully recorded the family experiences in her journal.[3] Over the next decade, many wives joined their husbands at sea, whaling in the Pacific. Betsy Tower told another whaling wife, Mary Brewster, who was visiting aboard her ship, that "a number of ladies were out this season with their husbands. I am glad they are following the late fashion."[4]

In 1858 Reverend Samuel C. Damon described this phenomenon in *The Friend*, the Seamen's Friend Society newspaper published in Honolulu, Hawaii: "A few years ago it was exceed-

ingly rare for a Whaling Captain to be accompanied by his wife and children, but it is now very common. An examination of the list of whalers shows that no less than 42 are now in the Pacific. Just one half that number are now in Honolulu. The happy influence of this goodly number of ladies is apparent to the most careless observer."[5] By mid-century hundreds of New England women were traveling aboard the great clipper ships as well, becoming more familiar with exotic Pacific ports than with Boston or New York. In the second half of the nineteenth century, Maine women married to captains of trading ships joined whaling wives from Nantucket, Martha's Vineyard, and New Bedford to become "the most traveled segment of American society, to whom home was a ship."[6]

Life was not always idyllic. Whaling wives described the frightening conditions during storms, the tedium and intense heat of the doldrums, and the sickening atmosphere of a whaler—virtually a floating slaughterhouse. But while women might have been reluctant to follow their husbands aboard a whaler, square-rigged merchant vessels were better suited for family life. They were relatively comfortable, stable, dry, and had plenty of space on the afterdeck for a woman to stroll, read, write, embroider, and teach their children.[7] The space provided for this "royal family" was small, but it was often luxuriously decorated and required less housekeeping than a home ashore.[8]

Most sailing wives adjusted to shipboard life and busied themselves with traditional women's work, continuing such chores as sewing, ironing, and caring for their children. In addition, they had more leisure to pursue fashionable Victorian hobbies. Clara Baker of Gardiner, Maine, installed an organ and played Gilbert and Sullivan tunes, painted china and pictures, kept scrapbooks, and made pictures and wreaths of colorful, gelatin-laden seaweed from the Chincha Islands.[9]

Although there were advantages to small quarters which greatly simplified housekeeping, sailing wives were committed to family life and felt obligated to perform duties similar to those to which they were accustomed ashore. One important differ-

ence, however, was that they had to accomplish their domestic tasks within cramped quarters, amidst the pitch and roll of the ship, with fewer amenities, and sometimes with less help than they had ashore. Jenny Prescott of Woolwich, Maine, described her chores on a typical stormy day at sea: "I have done a big day's work today. Four button-holes....It is blowing a gale and has been for twenty-four hours....The ship is hove to under a lower-main-topsail. It is very rainy and the water comes in through the skylights. Attending to the children, the cat and dog, watching and reading the barometer and bearing patiently the rolling and pitching has made my day's work."[10] Scott Dow, writing about his Maine seafaring family, explained that his mother sailed with three small children, while two older children were left ashore to finish school. "Four times she went to sea with a six weeks' old baby, taking a goat aboard to supply milk for the children. She had to do all the sewing for the family, wash and iron, and administer old family remedies whenever someone was sick. Yet she still found time to read the Bible through."[11] Another Maine woman, Maria Higgins, sailing with her family in 1883, accomplished many domestic tasks and taught her children reading, spelling, and arithmetic each morning. She and the children also tended the chickens and hens, two sheep, two pigs, and a dog and cat. Watching her children "race around brown, wild and barefooted like Indians," she commented on how easily they adapted to sea life. Her boy was less care than on land.[12]

Domestic chores and Victorian needlework were not enough for whaling wives, who were fully aware that filling barrels with oil meant going home sooner. Women who wanted to be involved in the commercial activities of the ship gave female skills, such as sewing, a maritime application. Many made or repaired ships' sails. Lucy Smith had a sewing machine aboard, which she used "to make a mainsail for one boat, a jib for another, and canvas cover for the chronometer box."[13] Eliza Williams wrote: "Have sowed [sic] a little for the first time, helped my Husband make a sail for his boat. Quite pleasant. Helped to finish the sail today, then my Husband lowered his boat to try the sail."[14]

Although life aboard a whaler — a veritable floating slaughterhouse — was cramped and Spartan, a full-rigged merchant vessel could be reasonably comfortable. Here Mary Van Horn poses beside her pump organ on the *Helen A. Wyman*.
Courtesy Maine Maritime Museum.

Usually better educated than their husbands, who typically signed aboard ship at an early age, sailing mothers taught their children to read, write, and do arithmetic.[15] An 1827 Maine law reimbursed parents who undertook to teach their seafaring children the required school curriculum.[16] Joanna Colcord described the lessons that went on daily aboard her father's ship: "We were living geography, although we knew only the edges of the continents....Mathematics, too, was a living subject; our vessel found the way about the world by its aid....I took my final examinations from Searsport High School in Hong Kong harbor, the questions being sent out by mail, and the tests, proctored by my mother."[17] Shipboard schooling gave mothers valuable experience in teaching their children scholarly subjects, and traveling the world broadened the horizons of both mothers and children beyond the limitations of the New England town.

Although many sailing wives preferred to mask their yearnings to travel by assuming traditional roles, others ventured into the realm of male activity aboard ship. Wives who were not particularly fond of, or adept at feminine domestic pursuits found that life aboard ship offered them the opportunity to try their hand at traditional "masculine" activities, such as navigation, seamanship, or keeping the ships' log and accounts. Official ship's logs rarely revealed what really went on aboard ship or ashore, but simply recorded the weather and ship's progress. Sailing wives' journals, by contrast, often abound with detailed descriptions of the business of whaling and foreign trade, while others are filled with keen observations of the natural world and foreign cultures. A number of sailing wives learned navigation and were invaluable in helping to set sights and stand watch. Being qualified in nautical affairs, some became ship's officers of a sort by taking their turns at the helm and standing watches. Mary Lawrence proudly entitled her journal, kept aboard the *Addison*, "The Captain's Best Mate."[18]

Commenting in later years about her life on the bark *Charles W. Morgan*, where she spent her honeymoon in 1896, Honor Earle admitted: "A whaler, you know, is not the place to have the liveliest time in the world, so I applied myself to learning

navigation." A former mathematics teacher, she had no trouble mastering figures to determine latitude and longitude. She became official navigator of the *Morgan* between 1895 and 1905.[19]

Aboard the *Bangalore* on his wedding trip around Cape Horn in 1906, Captain Banning decided to teach his new bride, Georgia Maria Blanchard, celestial navigation. He bought her a sextant, and together they took sights and charted their positions. The couple worked together – Banning at the sextant and Georgia at the chronometer. She took her turn on deck and they worked out the position of the ship. Georgia learned to determine latitude by the moon. Despite her entrance into the male world, Georgia continued to sew, thread needles for the sails, and in the evening walk the decks, read, and listen to the phonograph.[20]

Eleanor Creesy, wife of Captain Josiah Creesy of the famous clipper *Flying Cloud*, served as navigator on all its record-breaking runs. Both were born in Marblehead in 1814 and were devoted to the sea. "Nellie," who watched other women of her family waiting at home for their sea-going husbands, decided that sitting by quietly was not for her. She took up navigation, and when they were married in 1841 she and her husband went to sea together as captain and navigator. Never again did they reside in Marblehead; nor did they have children. Captain Creesy abided by his wife's navigational judgments, which were a key factor in the *Flying Cloud*'s success.[21]

Dorothea Balano was proud of her navigational achievements, and contrasted her knowledge of theory with her husband's "by guess and by God": Her husband, she confided in her journal, "hasn't the remotest idea of the theory behind it all and I do believe that if his tables were lost we'd sail in circles....I do believe that with a bit more study I might make up our own tables were they lost."[22] The women who studied navigation developed a great deal of pride in their accomplishments and were often recognized by newspapers back home. While their knowledge, skills, and services were important in an emergency, the time had not yet arrived in America when these remarkable women would

be allowed to apply their skills to a career on land or sea as a means of supporting themselves or their families. They were forced to be content as "the captain's best mate."

Other wives, who took little interest in learning how to navigate a ship through treacherous waters, endeavored instead to navigate the unchartered waters of changing male behavior at sea. They used more subtle means, such as their supposed moral superiority and psychological insight, to steer their husbands and the male crew onto a path of righteousness. Once aboard ship, many sailing wives enthusiastically carried on the role of moral reformers and nurturers of the sick and injured as they had done ashore. Some women accompanied their husbands in order to mitigate the temptation offered lonely seamen by the exotic women of the South Sea Islands. Mrs. Wallis, the wife of a Nantucket whaling captain, wrote in her journal: "The girls came on board for the vilest of purposes, but they said these were not accomplished as the sailors were afraid of the captain's woman."[23] Although Victorian women were expected to set a moral example, sailing wives were not always successful in controlling men's behavior away from the New England shore. Captain Randolph's wife secluded herself for many weeks in her cabin during the return trip from the Hawaiian Islands to show her disapproval of native women aboard ship in Honolulu.[24]

Some women also tried to soften the harsh discipline aboard ship or to mediate between captain and crew. Charity Norton of Martha's Vineyard sailed with her husband on every voyage, regulating his temper and willfulness and protecting him from retribution at the hands of his crew. She courageously stood between the crew and her husband's tyrannies. At one point her husband had deserters bound to the rigging. Charity appeared on deck and demanded: "John, what are those men in the rigging for?" John replied, "I'm going to lick 'em." Firmly Charity responded, "Oh no you're not." In the face of her opposition the hot-tempered captain backed down.[25]

Wives who knew they could do little or nothing to stop their husbands' tyrannical behavior remained below listening to the

awful noises of a flogging filter down from the deck. When one of the officers flogged a seaman, Elizabeth Stetson wrote in her journal: "Sylvia flogged Jose Solas for getting the ship aback I do not think it was right," underlining the entry in her fury. Viola Fish Cook's husband was a bully by nature – a "bucko" – and his sadism disgusted and appalled her. After he carried out a multiple flogging aboard ship in the Arctic, Viola rebelled by locking herself up in her cabin for nine months![26] Wives walked a fine line to stay in favor with both their husbands and crew. If a captain's wife was too sharp-tongued, or monitored the crew's behavior too closely, the crew would disdainfully refer to the ship as a "hen frigate," rather than a "lady ship" as some sailing wives called their floating homes.

When a sailor was injured or sick, very often the master's wife nursed him, as the captain and officers had little time to care for ailing seamen. Sometimes she brought from home her own collections of dried herbs used for healing. Mary Stark wrote home on a passage from Honolulu to New York in 1855: "There are four of the crew sick and laid up – one I think has got the consumption...I had a syrup made for him yesterday of noneset, catnip and a little wormwood."[27] When the *Powhatan*'s crew contracted smallpox, Caroline Mayhew nursed the seamen, then her husband – and took over the navigation as well. Finally, exhausted by her efforts, Caroline herself fell ill with the disease. As she slowly recovered, the grateful crew showered her with scrimshaw work to show their appreciation.[28]

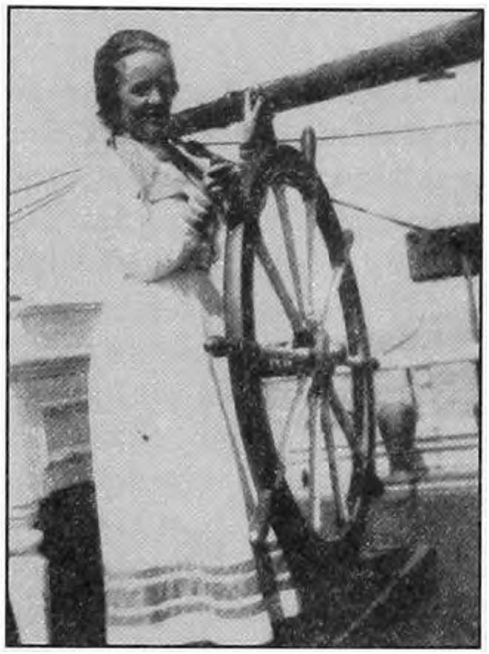
Eleanor Creesy was nurse and meal-planner aboard the *Flying Cloud*, as well as its navigator. She made sure that plenty of meat and vegetables were aboard, that food was properly prepared, and that the crew received sufficient rest. On one occasion, she persuaded her husband to slow the ship while a search was made for a man overboard.[29] With their nurturing skills, women gave shipboard experience a home-like touch. Seamen felt more at home aboard a "lady ship," and sailing wives felt useful and needed.

Religious wives took seriously their role of "angel of the house" and attempted to create an environment of peace and

moral uplift aboard ship. Mary Brewster, the first woman to go whaling in the Arctic Ocean in 1849, explained her reasons for making the voyage: "I am going and in the end hope I may be a useful companion, a soother of woes, a calmer of troubles and a friend in need."[30] Praying for the crew was the duty of the captain's wife, even though ship's protocol did not allow her to speak to them.

Fearing ridicule from some of the sailors, wives were sometimes reluctant to preach openly to the crew. Mary Lawrence, concerned about impropriety, allowed her little daughter Minnie to bring religion to the forecastle. One Sunday she encouraged her to fill her doll carriage with Bibles and wheel it down to the crew's berthing area. In her journal Mary described Minnie's success: "She came back very quickly with an empty carriage, had it reloaded, and went again until she gave away every one that we had. She said they all wanted one, even the Portuguese that could read. I could but think they were taken far more readily from her than they would have been from anyone else." Soon seven-year-old Minnie was running a Sunday school class. This must have been a treat for the sailors for, as her mother wrote, she had "a great many strange and original thoughts."[31] Calista Stover was not always as successful as little Minnie Lawrence in reaching the crew's religious conscience. Still, conducting a religious school every night and on Saturdays and Sundays made her feel useful aboard ship. She instructed the crew about the evils of intemperance, her favorite topic, and read the Bible. She noted that attendance was particularly good after a storm.[32] In New England, the ministry was solely a masculine calling, but out at sea a woman could "set to preaching." Perhaps wives were not always successful in reforming sailors, but serving as Christian missionaries aboard their husbands' ships gave them a sense of mission and a certain status within the all-male shipboard hierarchy.

Although they managed to keep busy, leaving the security of their New England villages and the support of their families and friends was a heavy sacrifice for sailing wives. Their sea journals are filled with



For seafaring wives, shipboard duties included the traditional lot — sewing, nurturing children, and craft-making. Venturing into a largely masculine world, the wives of sea captains also experimented with new social roles.
Courtesy Penobscot Marine Museum, Searsport; Ruth Montgomery Collection.

expressions of heart-rending grief on parting from their "dear ones" ashore. Nearly all the diaries mentioned how much the wives missed their church and family, especially on Sundays. Eliza Williams pined for the two children she had left behind with her mother. She also missed the spiritual consolation and companionship of her church, which had been an important part of her life in Wethersfield, Connecticut. She wrote in her diary how much she missed holidays and family celebrations: "Thanksgiving, that day of all others that we take so much comfort in at home with Friends, is over now; we knew nothing about it here."[33]

The best cure for loneliness at sea was "gamming," a social ritual of visiting between ships at sea. There were whole floating communities of New England whaling families in the Arctic seas during the summer. The "gam" flourished as women often spent

the day visiting back and forth on neighboring ships. Visiting captains might also bring letters from home, fresh food, newspapers, and news from other ships. Mary Lawrence awoke one morning in the Bering Sea to discover fifteen whalers around the *Addison*. Many carried neighbors and relatives from back home. Just as the women had walked down the street to visit with their friends in New Bedford or Nantucket, so they now rode from ship to ship in the whaleboats.

The "gamming chair," a kind of armchair, often made from a barrel and rigged so that it could be raised and lowered over the ship's side, transported the captain's wife without her having to climb a rope ladder and expose her ankles. Not only was the gam a typical Victorian social call, but the captains and ladies exchanged gifts—preserves, cookies, pets ranging from crickets to kittens, and potted plants, as well as much needed practical articles. Visits sometimes continued overnight, and no woman who was starved for female companionship ever complained about the overcrowding in the cabin.[34]

In August 1853 Susan Fisher came back from gamming to find four ladies from other ships waiting for her. All of them were old friends and they stayed the night. "It really seemed delightful," she wrote, "to have someone to talk with, besides getting whales and losing anchors, but the gam is up." Catching whales was why they were at sea, so Susan Fisher bid her female friends farewell: "In a few hours we shall be many miles apart so farewell female society for the present."[35]

Unlike ashore, female visiting at sea was under the control of their husbands, whose priority was the business of whaling. Eliza Williams commented about the joys and disappointments of gamming cut short by the hunt for whales, which definitely came first: "Mrs. Randolph stayed with me all night. Capt. R. and my Husband thought it best that we separate, as they might see whales, so Mrs. Randolph and the Boy have gone aboard their Ship. I was some disappointed, as well as herself, for we had reckoned upon a nice gam today, but it is whaling times now, and the ladies must submit."[36] Mary Dow, traveling on a clipper, was consoled to speak across the water to a ship with two ladies

aboard: "So I am not the only female on this wide waste of water."[37]

Ships also gathered in certain favorite ports in South America, Mexico, and the Pacific where wives could spend a few days or several months ashore meeting and visiting with other sea captains' wives. Hilo and Honolulu were the most popular meeting places in the Pacific. When whaleships left for the dangerous Arctic whaling grounds, the captains' families often remained safely in Hawaii. Eliza Williams on her first visit to Honolulu described it as delightfully homelike, almost a miniature New England: "It is a pretty place...and reminds me much of home. I went out shopping two or three times and thought it a good deal like shopping at home."[38] Wives welcomed a rest from the hardships aboard ship and indulged in shopping, visiting, and churchgoing. In Hawaii, wives received letters and news from home, and permanent residents on the islands, including the New England missionary families, offered a friendly and welcoming community. "I kept wondering," one wife wrote about Hawaii, "if I had died and gone to heaven."[39] Women were also happy to return to their shipboard routine. After a five-week visit in Honolulu, Sarah Luce wrote: "Formed several very pleasant acquaintances, made some very pleasant calls. Enjoyed some fine walks, but I am glad to get back to my home on board ship."[40]

Seafaring wives of the nineteenth century were neither feminists nor typical Victorian ladies, but revealed certain aspects of both. They continued to perform their usual domestic duties at sea – in an all-male environment and without the support of an accustomed female community. At sea, far from the critical judgment of a shore-based society, they sometimes extended the bounds of the "women's sphere" into the masculine world of seafaring. The difficult decision to go to sea, the risk of taking children along, the parting from family, friends and community, and the opportunity to extend their traditional roles called for difficult decisions and constant adjustments to changing situations. These experiences, along with the years many spent coping alone at home, enhanced their

self-confidence and developed their character and independence. Intrepid sailing wives were strong New England women who proved that they could learn new skills and adjust – even thrive – within the migrating, masculine world of seafaring.

NOTES

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[3]Linda Grant DePauw, *Seafaring Women* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1982), pp. 106-07.

[4]Joan Druett, "Those Female Journals," *The Log of Mystic Seaport* 40 (1989): 116.

[5]Reverend Samuel C. Damon, *The Friend* (Honolulu, Hawaii: Seamen's Friend Society, November 8, 1858), p. 84.

[6]Charles G. Bolte', editor, *Portrait of a Woman Down East* (Camden, Maine: Down East Books, 1983), p. 168.

[7]Ibid., p. 174.

[8]DePauw, *Seafaring Women* pp. 165-66.

[9]Bolte', *Portrait of a Woman*, p. 175.

[10]Jenny Prescott's journal, September 2, 1890, in *Woolwich Times*, Woolwich Historical Society, Woolwich, Maine.

[11]Scott J. Dow, "Captain Jonathan Dow: The Seafaring Days of Our New England Family," transcript, 1948, Penobscot Marine Museum, Searsport, Maine.

[12]Maria Higgins to her family, January 21, 1884, February 5, 1884, October 19, 1884, Maine Maritime Museum, Bath, Maine.

[13]DePauw, *Seafaring Women*, p. 153.

[14]Eliza William's journal aboard the *Florida*, 1858-1861, in Harold Williams, editor, *One Whaling Family* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1964), p. 7.

[15]Vita Dodson, "The Lady Ships," *The Log of Mystic Seaport* 36 (1984): 62.

[16]John F. Battick, "The Searsport 'Thirty-Six': Seafaring Wives of a Maine Community in 1880," *American Neptune* 44 (no. 3, 1984): 153.

[17]Joanna Colcord, "Childhood At Sea," pp. 7-8, transcript, Penobscot Marine Museum.

[18]Mary Chipman Lawrence, *The Captain's Best Mate: The Journal of Mary Chipman Lawrence on the Whaler Addison, 1856-1860*, edited by Stanton Garner (Providence: Brown University Press, 1966).

[19]Dodson, "Lady Ships," p. 60; Whiting Hough, *Whaling Wives* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1953), p. 259; DePauw, *Seafaring Women*, pp. 158-59.

[20]Georgia Maria Blanchard, "Our Wedding Trip Around Cape Horn," Penobscot Marine Museum.

[21]Suzanne J. Stark, "Mates at Sea: The Adventures of 19th-Century Captains' Wives," *The Log of Mystic Seaport* 39 (1986): 27; Jerry G. Florent, editor, "The Flying Cloud" in *With All Possible Sails Set* (New York: Hallmark Cards, Inc., 1979).

[22]Dorthea Balano, *The Log of the Skipper's Wife*, edited by James W. Balano (Camden, Maine: Down East Booksa, 1979), p. 23.

[23]Joan Druett, "More Decency and Order: Women and Whalemen in the Pacific," *The Log of Mystic Seaport* 39 (1987): 68.

[24]Ibid., p. 73.

[25]A.B.C. Whipple, "The Whalers," in *The Seafarers* (Alexandria, Virginia: Time-Life Books, 1979), p. 118; Whiting and Hough, *Whaling Wives*, p. 34.

[26]Joan Druett, *Petticoat Whalers: Whaling Wives at Sea, 1820-1920* (New Zealand: Collins, 1991), pp. 169-71.

[27]Stark, "Mates at Sea," p. 27.

[28]Dodson, "Lady Ships," pp. 62-63.

[29]Florent, "Flying Cloud."

[30]Mary Brewster's journal, May 2, 1849, Mystic Seaport Museum, Mystic, Connecticut.

[31]DePauw, *Seafaring Women*, p. 145.

[32]Carlista Stover Journal, Mystic Seaport Museum.

[33]Dodson, "Lady Ships," p. 63; Williams, *One Whaling Family*, p. 184.

[33]Balano, *Log of the Skipper's Wife*, p. 23.

[34]DePauw, *Seafaring Women*, pp. 118-119; Dodson, "Lady Ships," p. 63; Whipple, "Whalers," p. 124.

[35]Susan Fisher's journal, September 5, 1853, in Whiting Hough, *Whaling Wives*, p. 31.

[36]Eliza William's journal, April 25, 1860, in Williams, *One Whaling Family*, p. 99.

[37]Mary Dow's journal, June 17, 1838, Peabody Museum, Salem, Massachusetts.

[38]DePauw, *Seafaring Women*, p. 116.

[39]Whipple, "Whalers," p. 121.

[40]Sarah Luce's journal, in Whiting Hough, *Whaling Wives*, p. 188.

Constance Fournier received her Ph.D. in American Studies from the University of Hawaii at Manoa in 1993. A "sea wife" herself, she taught at the University of Hawaii in Honolulu. Having returned home to Maine, Ms. Fournier is revising her dissertation on the experiences of nineteenth-century New England maritime women for publication.